



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Federal Subsistence Board

1101 E Tudor Rd, MS 121
Anchorage Alaska 99503



Forest Service

Federal Waters Within the Boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge

2015 Kuskokwim Area Chinook Salmon Fishing Information News Release 1

Issued at: Bethel, Alaska
May 6, 2015

In preparation for another poor Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon run, the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge manager, through delegated authority from the Federal Subsistence Board, will issue Federal Special Actions to close the Chinook salmon fishery in federal waters within and adjacent to the boundary of the Refuge. These Federal Special Actions are being taken to conserve Chinook salmon within the Kuskokwim River drainage.

The Refuge manager will issue additional Federal Special Actions to restrict gear types to provide for Chinook salmon conservation. In-season indicators of salmon run strength, including the Bethel Test Fishery and other assessment projects operated by an assortment of partnerships between state, federal, and tribal organizations, will guide the timing of these actions.

Since 2010, the Kuskokwim River has experienced poor Chinook salmon returns with 2013 being the lowest return on record. The 2015 Chinook salmon run is forecast to be between 96,000 and 163,000 fish. The State of Alaska drainage-wide escapement goal is 65,000–120,000. Should the Chinook run return near the lower end of the forecast, even a very limited subsistence harvest could impact the likelihood of achieving escapement goals. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a management objective targeting the upper end of the escapement goal range.

The following are the expected Federal Special Actions:

Kuskokwim River Mouth to eastern Refuge boundary; Chinook salmon fishing is limited to only federally qualified users. (Federal Special Action)

- **Thursday, May 21, 2015, effective 6:00 a.m.** -- Federal public waters in that portion of the Kuskokwim River drainage that are within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge are closed to the harvest of Chinook salmon except by the residents of the Kuskokwim River drainage and the villages of Chefnak, Kipnuk, Kwigillingok and Kongiganak.

Kuskokwim River Mouth to Tuluksak (Federal Special Action)

- **Thursday, May 21, 2015, effective 6:00 a.m.** -- Chinook salmon fishing is closed to all user groups. Gill nets must be set, and are restricted to four-inch or less mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length and 45 meshes deep; this gill net opportunity is only allowed for 72 hours each week from 6:00 a.m. Thursday through 6:00a.m. Sunday. This area is closed to all gill nets from 6:01 a.m. Sunday through 5:59 a.m. Thursday weekly.

Tuluksak to the eastern Refuge boundary (Federal Special Action)

- **Thursday, May 28, 2015, effective 6:00 a.m.** -- Chinook salmon fishing is closed to all user groups. Gill nets must be set, and are restricted to four-inch or less mesh size not exceeding 60-feet in length and 45 meshes deep; this gill net opportunity is only allowed for 72 hours each week from 6:00 a.m. Thursday through 6:00 a.m. Sunday. This area is closed to all gill nets from 6:01 a.m. Sunday through 5:59 a.m. Thursday weekly.

Salmon Tributary Closures (Federal Special Action)

- **Sunday, June 7, 2015, effective 6:00 a.m.** -- All gillnets will be prohibited on the Kwethluk, Kisaralik, Kasigluk and Tuluksak tributaries to provide for Chinook salmon escapement.

The abundances of chum, sockeye, and coho salmon are expected to be large enough to meet escapement goals and provide subsistence and non-subsistence harvest opportunities. The timing of these opportunities will be announced in-season. Gill nets will be limited to mesh sizes of six-inches or less. Chinook salmon incidentally harvested with six-inch gear are legal and may be retained.

Throughout the season, fish other than Chinook salmon may be harvested by all user groups with other legal gear types including dipnet, beach seine, fish wheel, or rod and reel subject to permanent regulation. While using these other gear types, all Chinook salmon caught must be immediately returned to the water unharmed.

State and federal fishery management staff will continue to follow guidelines outlined in the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Plan 5 AAC 07.365, to the extent possible, to meet escapement goals, provide for subsistence use, and allow commercial fishing on available harvestable surpluses. ADF&G will manage the Kuskokwim river drainage above and below the Refuge during the federal closure. Additional State management guidelines will be defined by ADF&G for those areas. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will continue to work with ADF&G and their Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group, tribes and the public to ensure management objectives are being met and will continue to work with all constituents to evaluate the options for cultural, social, and other customary and traditional uses.

For more information on the Kuskokwim River Chinook salmon outlook, federal management and supporting fact sheet, visit: http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/topics/kuskokwim_2015.cfm

For additional information concerning this news release contact:

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